

Peace and Conflict Resolution of the Bangsamoro Problem in Southern Mindanao

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Abstract- This paper presents realistic scenarios on the bangsamoro community specifically the areas where people are involved in conflicts whether the nature of such conflicts is personal gap or misunderstanding family feuds, land issues and political power. The key to peace and conflict resolution or solutions and mitigating approaches are directly needed and presented.

Index Terms- Peace and Conflict Resolution, Bangsamoro Problem, Southern Mindanao, Family Feuds, Land Issues and Political Power.

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the creation of the first human being, Prophet Adam (peace be upon him), conflicts have arisen essentially because people adopt and uphold different principles in the community. When right principles are changed by the wrong ones, conflicts usually ensue. However, there is no dispute or disagreement that cannot be resolved. Hence, it cannot remain forever. From the Islamic standpoint, issues in a conflict should not be made complicated so that the search for peace becomes easier to undertake. Especially for Muslims, peace should dominate what is their hearts and be viewed as a means to attain the ultimate objective which is the pleasure of Allah (S.W.T) in this world and success in the hereafter. It is in this light that Muslim is enjoined by Allah (S.W.T) to uphold peace in the following Qur'anic verse:

“And if two parties of believers take up arms against each other, make peace between them. If either of them commits aggression against the other, then fight against the aggressor till the party submits to Allah’s judgement. When it submits, make peace between them in equity (in accordance with Allah’s commandments), and justice (in Allah dealings). Allah loves the equitable.”
¹(Qur’an, Al-Hujurat, 49:9)

In Islam, it is obligatory for Muslim to embark on peace- building efforts meant to reconcile brother Muslims who are involved in a conflict. In doing so, they should be guided by the instructions of Allah (S.W.T) as in the above-cited verse and the example shown by prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) that peace should be pursued on the basis of justice and equity to all concerned parties and for the sake of Allah (S.W.T) alone. To underpin the paramount importance of peace making in Islam, Allah (S.W.T) reiterates:

“Truly the believers are brothers. Make peace among your brothers (who are fighting); and remain conscious of Allah, so that you may be shown mercy.”
²(Qur’an, Al-hujurat, 49:10)

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has consistently provided an exemplary life devoted to maintaining peace in the community for which he was resorted to by the people as a favourite Hakam.³ (Arabic term meaning “arbitrator of disputes”) His foremost achievement in this regard was his exceptional success in diffusing a dispute among tribal chieftains locked in a controversy on who should from among them be conferred the distinct honour of reposting the al-hajar al-aswad⁴ (The black stone which muslim tradition says fell from heaven and is installed in the eastern corner of the Ka’bah, islam’s holiest shrine.) during the rebuilding of the Ka’bah. As an extraordinary display of wit and prophetic wisdom, the holy prophet (S.A.W) asked for a piece of cloth to be laid on the ground, put the blessed rock thereon and requested all the disputing chieftains to each take hold of the cloth, and together lift and bring it to eastern side of the Ka’bah where the prophet (S.A.W) installed the black stone. With justice and Fairness to all, prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) satisfactorily resolved the conflict which could have otherwise potentially ended in a bloodbath.⁵(Ali K. A Study of Islamic history. 1950 Ed.)

As in the foregoing narrative, peace is intimately tied with justice in Islam. You cannot achieve one without the other. Legitimate grievances of the affected party must be addressed, if real and lasting peace is to be attained.⁶ (Salah, Jubair. The endless tyranny 2009)

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. Identify ways and strategies designed to resolve all kinds of conflicts in the bangsamoro communities based on Islamic principles, traditions and cultures of the local communities.
2. Sustain, maintain and appreciate the meaning and importance of peace, harmony in these communities; and
3. Mitigate and prevent conflicts in a manner that the disputants will realize the advantages of having peace towards a better, secured and productive life as ordained in Islam.

III. PROPOSED PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Muslims are obliged to establish peace building efforts in a society. Allah Said”

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you with Allah is that (believer) who has at-taqwa [i.e. he is one of the muttaqqun (the pious)]. Verily, Allah is all-knowing, well-acquainted (with all things).”⁷(Qur’an, Al-Hujurat, 49:13)

In Islam, Muslim leaders are obliged to make effort and solution to reconcile people who are involved in a conflict.

“And if two parties of believers take up arms against each other, make peace between them. If either of them commits aggression against the other then fight against the aggression till the party submits to Allah’s judgement. When it submits, make peace between them in equity (in accordance with Allah’s commandments) and justice (in Allah dealings). Allah loves the equitable.” (Qur’an Al-hujurat 49:9)

In Islam, guide a person to avoid suspicion and conjecture that is rejected. Allah (S.W.T.) says,

“Oh you who believe avoid suspicion as much (as possible): for suspicion are some cases of Sin.... (Qur’an Al-hujurat 49:12)

A. Methods of Solving Conflict

1. The finding of the research which is the conflict management has the various methods of solving conflict, which is the selection of appropriate method depends on the situation. These methods are:
 - (i) **Confrontation:** the decrease of communication between conflicting groups can deepen the conflict. Management or people involved in peace making can bring the conflicting groups in a face to face meeting. In this meeting the groups are supposed to identify the problem, and then solve it. This method has proven to be the very effective when the conflict stems from misunderstanding. In more complex problems, this method was not as effective.
 - (ii) **Expansion of resources:** increasing the resources can certainly solved conflicts that are caused by the limitation of resources. The problem with this method is that resources are usually scarce, and it is not very easy to expand them. Nevertheless, the feasibility of this method shall always be considered.
 - (iii) **Providing an expert opinion:** conflicts between groups can be cause by different perception of the reality or by different understanding of some matters. On many occasions, the groups involved in the conflict do not have enough knowledge to judge with authority, which view is right or which view is best. Jawdat said, “ the judge of a conflict is only knowledge.”⁸ (Jawdat, Sa’ied, Work is a skill and a will. Damascus 1983) To support his opinion, he quoted the following Qur’anic verse where Allah (S.W.T) says,

“...Say: Have you any (certain) knowledge? If so, produce it for us. You follow nothing but conjecture; you do nothing but lie.”⁹ (Qur’an, Al-an’am. 6:148)

In this situation, it is best to bring an outside expert that will be able to make a judgement on the issue. This outside expert should be able to win the trust of the conflicting groups, and should possess the necessary professional credibility. The expert shall make a professional judgement and shall be able to convince both parties that he/she did so. Convincing both parties about the expert’s judgement is instrumental in the settlement of the conflict.¹⁰ (Dr.Naceur Jabnour. Islam and Management)

B. Peace and Conflict Management Major Processes

(1) Conflict assessment

Before coming up with a concrete solution, the root causes of the conflict must be checked properly without biases. People by nature are law abiding as long as the policies are beneficial to them. However, if the rules are not aligned with their culture and tradition, instead, they have feeling of being conquered, and proud and resentful, they struggle for freedom...

However, as a peace advocate, he should not let the problems to remain unsettled. Rather, it should be faced by listing all forms of conflicts or issues and those related major concerns that led to the conflict such as uncertain opportunity, little incentives, work load, low wages, and human behaviour etc.,

After identifying the conflict, it should be followed by analysis and evaluation of the concerned issues in order to come up with a concrete solution. This formula will lead people to have peace of mind towards peaceful community and harmonious society, focus on the development and later become effective planners or participants towards industrialization of the community.

(2) Conflict treatment

As mentioned earlier, every single problem or issue must have a solution as a people can never stay or live alongside with their problems forever. Solution must play a great role as in the following:

1- Conflict response development

This involves defining one by one the possible alternative solutions that make contending parties feel settled, followed by an enhancement step for opportunities for them to live peacefully within the community with clear means to respond to contingent challenges or issue. As Muslims, being followers of Islam, there is no excellent remedy but an effective orientation from the perspectives of Islam as the primary source of conflict settlement which any true believing Muslims (Bangsamoro) cannot refuse.

2. Peaceful Approach

Exerts all efforts and means to find solution to the problems, Repose full trust in allah (S.W.T) that he will give you wisdom and power for an accurate and excellent approach with the deep conviction that you are settling the dispute for his sake.

Allah says: **“And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in allah; surely he is the hearing, the knowing.”**¹¹ (Qur’an, Al-Anfal. 8:61)

If they ask for solutions and negotiation, pacify them with peace and sincerity and submit the rest for allah’s decision.

3. Valisate Issues

Islam stresses the importance of patience (sab’r). In fact, it is one of the BDA core values, after receiving and information.

Allah says: **“O believers! If a wicked person brings you a piece of news, inquire first in its truth, lest you should wrong others unwittingly and repent of what you have done.”**¹² (Qur’an, Al-Hujurat.49:6)

4. Decide with Justice

Islamic shari’ah which was revealed by allah (S.W.T) established the foundation of justice in the muslim society in a unique manner. It did this by basing the idea of establishing justice on divine guidance, for allah is the one who enjoins justice; he is the one

who is watching over the way it is implemented in daily life; he is the one who will reward for implementing it, and he is the one who will punish anyone who fails to do so.

Islam commands muslim to be just towards those whom they love and those whom they dislike. Islam wants the muslims to establish absolute justice for the sake of allah alone, not for any other reason, so that balance should not be tipped by love or hatred. The sincere muslim should not let his feelings love or dislike influence him or make him biased when passing judgement or bearing witness.

Many verses in the qur'an explain the correct Islamic way of justice towards all people, those whom we like and those whom we dislike, in all situation and circumstances.

Allah says concerning justice towards those whom we dislike:

“O you who believe! Stand firmly for justice, as witnesses to allah, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin.”¹³ (Qur'an, An-Nisa. 4:135)

And he says concerning justice towards those whom we dislike:

“O' you believe! Stand out firmly for allah is just witnesses; and let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety.”¹⁴ (Qur'an, Al-Ma'idah. 5:8)

When you are just, you should do that for the sake of allah (S.W.T), because you are dealing with him; you are motivated by your feelings regarding those for or against whom you are witnessing, or by any desire to serve the interest of individual or group. You should not be influenced by the circumstances surrounding the matter concerning which you are bearing witness or judgements are being passed. You should be free from any bias, whims and desires, interest or any other consideration.

The qur'an says that “even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin...”¹⁵ (Qur'an, An-Nisa' 4:135)

Islam describes justice as the primary objective of sending the divinely relevant messages and the prophets to mankind in this world:

*“indeed we have sent our messengers with clear proofs, and revealed with them the scripture and the balance (justice) that mankind may keep up justice .”*¹⁶ (Qur'an, Al-hadid. 57:25)

How great is justice and how heavily it weighs in the balance of allah. How great are its benefits to mankind. The books were revealed from heaven and the messenger was sent to all nations with justice, and on it the heaven and the earth are founded.

Islam enjoins justice in word, even if this word makes relatives angry with us when allah (S.W.T) says that “and whenever give your word (i.e. judge between men or give evidence), says the truth even if a near relatives is concerned.”¹⁷ (Qur'an Al-an'am. 6:152)

It enjoins in testimony if we are called to give testimony, no matter how difficult that may be for us or for the ones against whom we bear witness, because it is witness for the sake of allah. Allah (S.W.T) says;

“and take us witness two just person from among you (Muslims): and established the testimony for allah.”¹⁸ (Qur'an, At-Talaq. 65:2)

“O' you believe! Stand out firmly for allah as just witnesses.”¹⁹ (Qur'an, Al-ma'idah. 5:8)

And it enjoins justice in judging. Allah says:

“verily, allah commands that you should render back the trusts to those, to whom they are due; and that when you judge between men, you judge with justice.”²⁰ (Qur'an, An-nisa. 4:58)

The principle of Islam in controlling issues is still the immediate and urgent effort to parties involved in conflict; at least to neutralize them while thinking of a final resolution. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) has stressed the important role of individual to become a third party, to help settle disputes in an Islamic way.

These are the following interventions;

- a.) Avoidance: eliminating specific conflict, usually by eliminating the cause.
- b.) Mitigation: reducing the expected monetary value of conflict; even by reducing the probability of occurrence; reducing the conflict even of its value or both.

Negotiation: negotiation is the bargaining between the two parties that have recognized their conflict. Representatives of the conflicting groups can handle it. This negotiation process is very efficient when there is a tendency for reconciliation or agreement. It is not as effective when the settlement will require judging in favour of one side. Allah, the all-high, said regarding marital conflicts:

“If you fear a breach between them twain, appoint two arbiters, one from his family and the other from hers; if they wish for reconciliation, Allah will cause their reconciliation: for Allah has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.”

McKersie stated that negotiators could view negotiation as a win-lose situation where gains by one party mean losses by the other. Negotiation can also be viewed as a win-win situation where the interest of both parties can be maintained. This situation appears to be unrealistic; however, there is usually an innovative potential solution that offers greater joint benefits than compromise. These solutions are termed integrative agreements.

5. Promote Ethics and Morality

The muslim society is distinguished by its virtue and morality. It is a society in which virtue, noble standards and good behaviour form an essential part. Hence, it is a moral society in which moral standards dominate all affairs which give it its distinct character, whether that is in field or science, economy, politics, art, war or peace. There is no separation between these things in morality because Islamic shari'ah came to complete noble values, as it says in the hadith narrated by bukhari in *al-adab al-mufrad* that the prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said: **“I was only sent to perfect good morals.”**²¹ (Dr. Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi. The ideal muslim society as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. International Islamic publication, Riyadh, KSA 2007)

Towards this end, Islamic scholars also emphasize the promotion of Islamic ethics in order to prevent, mediate, and resolve various conflicts. This must take place along with a personal transformation, developing spiritual awareness through *Dhikr* (constant remembrance of God and his Grace), praying and fasting as well as through acts of charity and love for other human beings.

One should exercise compassion and forgive others who have done him harm, and move away from greed, egocentricity, crass materialism, and harming others and work to live peacefully in cooperation with one another. Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) emphasized that

“The true believers to his co believers are like a house in which one another is the support of another one.”²² (Hadith an Nawawi)

6. Promote Peace and Reconciliation

The Qur'an constantly uses the word *Sulha* in resolving all types of conflicts. It means seeking peace, reconciliation, compromise and settlement. As such, during the early Islamic history, muslim jurists developed a number of legal structures and institutions, using a variety of techniques to resolve conflicts amicably, and achieve peace. Among these are the following:

1. Appointment of a justice of peace (Qadi as sulh) to oversee the processes of mediation, arbitration to achieve settlement and peace.
2. Parties in conflict have the option of resolving their dispute through a *Wasta*, (third-party mediator), who would ensure that all parties were satisfied with the outcome.
3. Other strategies include *Tahkeem*, (intermediaries) to represent the parties. These intermediaries should be able to represent the parties' position as clearly as possible, to negotiate on their behalf, and guarantee that the parties receive a fair settlement that could include financial compensation, service to the demonstration of reconciliation.

These procedures and relevant strategies need to be revived and further developed utilizing all possible modern techniques. There are a number of organizations currently involved in conflict resolution. Others provide training for solving interpersonal problems and helping resolve issues within a family.

IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Competition is welcomed in Islam if it is done to enhance the role of man as Allah's vicegerent and as a means to encourage Muslims to work harder to better themselves, their lives and their society. In such a case, competing for business success is desirable. However, when competition is for self-aggrandizement and ego satisfaction, it becomes prohibited. This kind of competition usually involves envy, hatred, and not in accordance with the prophetic instruction about loving for fellow Muslims what one loves for him/herself.

Allah for conflicts, Muslim shall neither reject them altogether, nor allow them to deepen until they become dysfunctional. Muslim has to follow the wise policy of being justly balanced.

“Thus we have made of you an Ummah justly balanced, that you might be witnessed over the nations, and the messenger is a witness over yourselves...”²³
(Qur'an 2:143)

Conflict is sometimes necessary and becomes unavoidable in the process of fulfilling god's command to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil. But such conflicts should never get personal. It is the duty of every Muslims to voice his or her opinion on matters of common interest, and oppose what he or she perceives to be wrong. The process of correcting a decision should be free of any personal attacks, gossips, or stereotypes. In case these conflicts are deep enough to be dysfunctional, the groups have to avoid its negative consequences within their own group and in relation to the other groups. Arbitration is necessary to smoothen or solve conflicts. The arbitrator shall be arbitrators should also possess the necessary communication. This is because the level of suspicion among conflicting groups is usually high. Emphasizing super-ordinate goals, and/ or common enemies and changing the structural variables are very efficient methods of conflict resolution. However, this method does not prevent the inception of other dysfunctional conflicts that could be related to the new structure.

The method that can both solve dysfunctional conflicts in the long term and prevent others to happen in the future, is the changing of human variables:

“...lo Allah changes not the conditions of a folk until they change that which is in their hearts” (Qur'an 13:11)

Since this method is designed to achieve long term goal, it has to be accompanied by one of the above mentioned methods to treat what can be called symptoms of the conflicts. Organizations shall have ongoing personnel development programmes that can help them avoid dysfunctional conflicts. Unfortunately, most companies ignore behavioural aspects of personnel development. Yet, this is the main target of this module---that is, to harmonize the solution among involved parties in order to avoid or at the least, mitigate any consequences that lead to conflicts thereby ensuring in the process the betterment of the Bangsamoro community.

Lastly, the following are our recommendations:

1. There must be a positive implementation of these tools.
2. These strategies and approaches are very practical that could be easily adopted by the community.
3. Muslim community could no longer remember their past experiences.
4. This model and/or approaches will become tools to focus on progressive move when these are absorbed and internalized.
5. Respected team or advocators of peace should be organized and those who are involved in this team should neutral people, not involved in the conflict.
6. A team composed of different elders in the community, must be organized to involve them in the process of settling issue or conflict. Thus the team members should be pious people, trusted and respected.
7. There must be continuing studies shall be studies and analyzed these type causes of conflicts in a particular and specific time. For attaining sustainable peace and concrete solution, the root causes of the conflict must be properly analyzed and check properly w/out biases.
8. Understand properly the real meaning and inflection of the Qur'an and hadith of applying solution to the conflict among people.
9. Promote Islamic ethics in order to prevent, mediate and resolve various conflicts.
10. Exert all efforts and means to find solutions to the problems. Repose full trust in Allah (S.W.T.) that he will give us wisdom and power for an accurate and excellent approach with the deep conviction that we are settling the dispute for His sake.

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